

Facilitating for Different Learning Styles

Everyone learns in different ways. Learning styles can be thought of as a relatively stable set of factors that affects our reaction to a learning environment. These factors are:

- ⇒ Cognitive (how we process information)
- ⇒ Emotional (how we feel about learning or the learning environment)
- ⇒ Characteristic (how our personality affects our learning)
- ⇒ Physiological (how our senses interact with our environment)

They can affect how we perceive, interact with, and respond to a learning environment.

Learning style research continues to reveal new information on how we learn, and the many models of learning styles that are currently out there all reflect different pieces of how people learn. Included here are some of the more common approaches to learning styles.

Sensory-based Learning Styles

Many tests and resources on learning styles focus on the way our senses take in information. A person's learning style in this sense is based on the most efficient way his/her body is wired to take in information.

Adapting your facilitation for this type of learning style is often one of the most useful ways to change your learning environment because it makes what you're teaching more accessible to all of your participants.

Visual Learners

- ⇒ Visual learners like to see what they're learning, preferring to take in information through the eyes. Images and pictures help them understand ideas and concepts. They are oriented more to shapes and forms (rather than words or numbers). When someone is describing something to them aloud, they may create a mental picture of what is being described.
- ⇒ People who learn by reading may or may not fall into the visual learner category. Often, people process information when reading by hearing themselves say the words, which falls under auditory learning. Some researchers define a separate category of learner who is reading/writing-oriented or language/word-oriented.
- ⇒ **Facilitating for visual learners:** Handouts, flip charts, and other visual aids should have plenty of pictures, images, charts, and graphs. When listening to a speaker, it may help visual learners to be able to see the speaker. It may help them to draw things out or to visualize or daydream.

Auditory Learners

- ⇒ Auditory learners learn best by hearing, preferring to take in information through the ears. They can be divided into two categories: "listeners" and "talkers". Listeners remember things they hear from other people or sources, while talkers need to hear their own voice in order to learn. There may also be some auditory learners who use both styles.
- ⇒ **Facilitating for auditory learners:** Ideas and concepts should be explained aloud. For "talkers", allowing them to read aloud or discuss with others may help them learn.

Kinesthetic-Tactile Learners

- ⇒ Kinesthetic-tactile learners learn best by moving or touching, preferring to take in information through their nerve-endings. Like auditory learners, they can be split into two categories: kinesthetic and tactile. Kinesthetic learners need to move while tactile learners need to touch.
- ⇒ **Facilitating for kinesthetic-tactile learners:** Experiential activities work best for these learners. Allowing them to pace at the back of the room, doodle, or do something with their hands may help them learn.

Information Processing Learning Styles

These learning styles may be called cognitive styles. Most of the theories related to information processing sort people based on two primary scales: whether they are global or analytical and whether they are reflective or impulsive learners.

Global and Analytical Learning Styles

This scale refers to the degree to which a person differentiates individual parts from a whole background. Another way to look at this scale is to compare it to whether a person will see the forest first or the individual trees.

- ⇒ **Global Learners:** See the big picture (the forest) first. They tend to learn best in collaborative situations and are usually thought to have greater interpersonal skills than Analytical Learners.
- ⇒ **Analytical Learners:** See the parts (the trees) first and then structure those parts into a whole. They tend to learn best in individualized, self-paced situations. They are usually associated with higher academic achievement than Global Learners.

Impulsive and Reflective Learning Styles

This scale refers to how quickly a person responds in a learning environment.

- ⇒ **Impulsive Learners:** Usually respond with the first thing that comes to mind. They may respond to questions before Reflective Learners have finished thinking.
- ⇒ **Reflective Learners:** Usually consider multiple options before responding. They may come up with different ways of looking at things than Impulsive Learners.

Personality-based Learning Styles

Personality is an important facet of how people learn. There are many different aspects to personality and many different theories on personality. For the purpose of *Roadmap* facilitation, perhaps the most useful scale to keep in mind is whether a person is more extroverted or introverted.

- ⇒ **Extroverted Learners:** Extroverted Learners usually learn better with other people. Social interaction while learning will be more useful for them. They are more likely to speak up in front of a group or take on visible leadership roles.
- ⇒ **Introverted Learners:** Introverted Learners usually learn better by themselves. Individual time while learning will be more useful for them. They are less likely to speak in front of a group or take on visible leadership roles.